

What is a Parish Poll?

A parish poll is a ballot of local electors (people on the electoral register) on a question affecting a parish. It is similar to a referendum on a local issue.

How is a Parish Poll requested?

The Local Government Act 1972 (sch. 12) allows a ballot to be called of local government voters on any question arising at a parish meeting (please note this is not the same as meeting of the parish council). A poll may be demanded with the consent of the person presiding at the meeting, or at the request of 10 electors or one third of those electors present (whichever is lower). The meeting must agree and vote on the wording of the question. Refer to the legislation for confirmation of what constitutes a parish meeting.

What question may be asked?

The wording on the ballot paper will be identical to the wording agreed at the meeting. The question must be answerable with yes/no answers and must not be ambiguous. The question should relate to parish affairs and must relate to a topic within the remit of the parish council. Once agreed at a meeting, the question cannot be changed.

Who organises the poll?

SCDC's Returning Officer (RO) will be responsible for organising the poll. The person who presided over the parish meeting should provide the RO with; the agreed question to be put, the name and address of the proposer of the question and the date of the parish meeting. The RO may not grant a poll if the question affects other parishes or is devoid of practical application.

When will the poll be held?

If agreed, the RO will fix a date for the poll between 14 and 25 working days after the day on which the poll is demanded.

Are there any differences between Parish Polls and Elections?

Polling at Parish Polls may only take place between 16:00 and 21:00 on the appointed day. There will not be any poll cards, and there will be no provision for voting by post or proxy – all voting will take place at the designated polling station.

Who pays for the poll?

The cost of any Parish Poll will be borne by the relevant parish council. It may therefore be sensible to consult relevant parish councils when planning for a poll.

Is the result of the poll binding?

The result is not binding. It may only provide an indication of support or opposition to a local matter.